

## **ICE Class**

Victim **I**mpact Offender **C**ompetency **E**ducation

ICE Class is a six (6) hour, four (4) session class for youth who have already pled or been found guilty of a criminal offense, or youth who have acknowledged responsibility for a criminal offense and have been diverted from the court process. Referral to ICE is made by the youth's Probation Counselor. The class focuses on:

- development of victim empathy
- the elimination of thinking errors in the youths' decision making.
- Understanding community service as an obligation and opportunity to make amends for the harm caused

Current understanding in the field of criminology holds that an important factor in changing criminal behavior and thinking lies in the increase of empathy for an offender's victim(s). Humanizing the criminal event, making the victim a real human being, and increasing the understanding of the human impacts of the criminal act are key to reshaping the thinking and behavior of offenders. In ICE, discussions and exercises requiring active participation will provide opportunities for this increased understanding and empathy to be experienced by young offenders.

Thinking errors<sup>1</sup> are also a common factor in criminal behavior. Helping youth recognize the thinking errors that were part of their offending behavior and decision making, and how such thinking is perhaps an ingrained habit for them, is the second focus of ICE.

Youth re-visit the offense that led to their participation in ICE. Individual and group assignments and interaction highlight each youth's personal thinking errors and challenge them to change those patterns of thinking.

Completion of the ICE class give participants the opportunity to look at themselves and the impact of their thinking and behavior on others. For many of these youth this class will be preparatory to their going out in the community to be involved in service (Restorative Community Service) that will enable them to make concrete amends for their offense and to experience a positive connection with the community.

### **Purpose:**

Participation in ICE class will significantly impact the perspective of juvenile offenders as they reflect on the criminal offense they have committed. This changed understanding will focus on: 1) how the youths' thinking errors contributed to their criminal offenses; 2) how the youth have harmed other people by their offenses; 3) the obligation the youth have to make meaningful amends to their victims and the community.

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<sup>1</sup> Ways of thinking, or rationalizing decisions and behavior. Lying, anger (as a control mechanism), excuse making, blaming, fronting, victim stance, entitlement and shutting down are all examples of thinking errors.

**Objectives:**

Successful completion of the ICE class will:

- enable offenders to verbally present a full account of the criminal offense they committed;
- reduce or eliminate thinking errors by offenders when they speak about their offense;
- increase the offenders ability to identify thinking errors when they hear them;
- enable offenders to state how any given thinking error, used in explaining a crime, is an avoidance of taking personal responsibility;
- enable offenders to state specific impacts or feelings victims may experience as a result of the offense;
- enable offenders to identify specific people harmed by the offense, and to state how these people may have been harmed;
- move offenders from a stance of feeling victimized by the community's response to their offense, to an understanding that they are personally responsible for their actions and the consequences of those actions (among those consequences is the obligation to make amends for the harm caused).
- enable offenders to state reasons they have an obligation to make amends to their victims and the broader community;
- assist offenders in identifying personal interests, skills and abilities and to identify specific community service opportunities where they can make use of their abilities.